

# critical digest

Vol. III No. 2

September 11, 1950

The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

## New Radio & TV Shows for Theatre Fans

WNEW, New York, plans two new programs for theatre fans. "Broadway Form Sheet" will "handicap" incoming shows before their Broadway opening. Show presented on Sundays will review "past performances" of cast, author, director and producers and feature two-way phone conversations with out of town critics who have caught road try-outs. Moss Hart objected last season to publications playing up out of town notices as unfair to all concerned. Second WNEW new show will present topical news items in the language of Shakespeare...Tallulah Bankhead will give the pre-game and post-game commentary on the World Series radio and TV programs...WNYC, New York, and other city-owned stations, will present Christopher Fry's The Lady's Not for Burning as part of the BBC World Theatre program...NBC will present special world premiere broadcast honoring opening of NBC-financed Call Me Madam...The Live Wire premiere was followed with a NBC-TV interview with cast members at 12 midnite.

## Delayed Reviews on New Comedy

The Live Wire-Playhouse, 8/17/50-9/9/50. Mike Todd production of Garson Kanin's comedy closed after run of 28 performances. Kerr, Commonweal, and Clurman, New Republic, both placed the play as a minor attempt. Both thought several spots contained very funny dialogue, but the banter isn't enough to carry the play through a full evening's entertainment. Chapman, News, wished that the entire play was as good as some of the vaudeville turns in it. Rumors persist that Playhouse will be sold by Ben Marden to ABC for television.

## Other Shows That Closed

Two other shows closed. Texas Li'l Darlin' will go on the road. Where's Charley? closes down because Ray Bolger needs a well deserved rest. Critical opinion was split on both musicals. Many panned former, charging it was "corny". Bolger show divided critics into his fans and those who don't like him.

## Broadway Hits Revisited

Bruni Falcon, who plays the Patricia Neway role twice weekly in The Consul, is more than satisfactory reports Sheaffer, Eagle. She accents the personal side of the story over the universal...Ray Middleton's performance in South Pacific is a good sound job comments Watts, Post. Critic still considers this the great American musical play...Jean Arthur's curtain speech to group of crippled polio patients was very moving, says Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, who witnessed it. She showed them how the flying apparatus works, and it didn't destroy the illusion at all.

## Mayor Impellitteri Urged to Act

New York's new mayor, Vincent Impellitteri, was urged by Theatre News Weekly to use his nine weeks in office to good advantage. Pass the Quinn Bill to encourage theatre building, encourage the city to use advertising and publicity to promote the theatre and establish a City Council Committee to study ways and means to strengthen the theatre was the suggested program.

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' Random Items '  
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St. John Terrell, originator of the "Music Circus" in Lambertville, N.J. is having his tent heated for the final weeks of the season...When O'Brian, Journal-American, was appointed drama critic for a wire service seven years ago he received a telegram from the boss of the Roman Catholic Cemeteries in Buffalo where he used to work as grave digger. "Glad to see you never changed your profession," the wire said.

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' A Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance '  
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Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

1. NY Times	11. Newark News	21. Catholic World
2. NY Herald Tribune	12. Women's Wear Daily	22. Commonweal
3. NY News	13. Daily Worker	23. Cue
4. NY Mirror	14. Wall Street Journal	24. Chr.Sci.Monitor
5. NY Compass (PM, Star)	15. Journal of Commerce	25. Sat.Review Lit.
6. NY Post	16. George Jean Nathan	26. Newsweek
7. NY Sun (Morehouse)	17. Morning Telegraph	27. Time
8. NY Journal American	18. Variety	28. Nation
9. NY World-Telegram & Sun	19. Billboard	29. New Republic
10. Brooklyn Eagle	20. Theatre Arts	30. New Yorker

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 2-9-13-14-22-25-29.  
So-So: 16-30.

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Pro: 27 votes. Con: 23. So-So: 6-29.

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfeld, 12/8/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 6-21-28.  
So-So: 16-19-22-23-27. None: 25.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-26-27-28-30.  
None: 13.

Kiss Me, Kate-Shubert, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. None: 28.

The Live Wire-Playhouse, 8/17/50. Pro: 3-4-5-10-11-12. Con: 2-6-8-14-16-18-23-  
24-26-27-30. So-So: 1-15-17-19.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 26 votes. Con: 16. So-So: 2-22-  
30.

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.

Peep Show-Winter Garden. 6/28/50. Pro: 4-5-6-8-10-11-15-17-19-23. Con: 1-2-12-  
16-20-26-27-28-29-30. So-So: 3-14-18.

Peter Pan-Imperial, 4/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 8-13-16-30. So-So: 6-14-19.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 27. So-So: 23.

Texas Li'l Darlin'-Hellinger, 11/25/49. Pro: 12 votes. Con: 1-4-7-8-18-19-23-  
29-30. So-So: 2-5-10-11-20-26-27. None: 25-28.

Where's Charley?-St. James, 10/11/48. Pro: 16 votes. Con: 6-7-12-13-16-19-22-  
24-25-26. So-So: 4-27. None: 10-28.

The Wisteria Trees-Martin Beck, 3/29/50. Pro: 15 votes. Con: 2-7-9-10-13-16-22  
23-25-26-27-28-30. So-So: 18-29.

Tickets Please!-Coronet, 4/27/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 11-16-27-30. So-So: 26

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' Green Room Department '  
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**HOCUS POCUS NEEDED...**Theatre owners might take tip from NY restaurants who boosted business by making each meal an "event" suggests George Jean Nathan, Journal-American. Dress up the ushers in attractive uniforms. Put slick white gloves on their hands. Place a few fiddles in the pit. Fire the loudmouth hat checker. Buy the ticket taker a new tuxedo. Stick up the flags of all nations in the men's rooms. Fix the dead bulbs in the chandeliers.

**SHAW PLAY PANNED...**London critics blasted Shaw's Far Fetched Fables. Several said he should have been advised not to have them publicly performed. Kindest words were that they are best plays now written by the 94 year old author.

**CRITICS ON CRITICS...**Drama critics don't read their colleagues' works surmises Watts, Post. If they did, they would realize that the subjects they delve into have often been covered by other critics...Morehouse, WT&S, mistook a local Chilian drama critic for the hotel electrician, but he imagines worse mistakes have been made in NY.

**ANY AUTHORS???**...\$2000 prize for new "contemporary significant" play offered by London's Art Theatre is going begging, Theatre Newsletter notes. Few manuscripts have been submitted and they are of poor quality. Bi-weekly paper wonders where the new playwrights are hiding, or even if there any such animals.

**FAN MAIL...**Lilly Christine, "Cat Girl" dancer in Peep Show has just recovered from the results of a free picture offer made by Wahls, News. Six thousand, three hundred twenty-four letters came in asking for a signed picture. Senders ranged from members of a Boy Scout troop to prisoners at the city's Tombs.

**TV & THEATRE...**Add to theories of how TV is going to affect theatre the comment of Kenny, Mirror. He is convinced that TV helped put theatre in the round over this season. Close up technique of TV made arena style popular.

**COSTUME WARS...**Start your own costume library suggests William Futch in an Equity magazine article. Idea evolved after many losing skirmishes with wrong size costumes in summer stock...Theatrical Costume Workers threaten strike against NY producers unless agreement is made whereby every costume worn on Broadway stage is made in union shop.

**WILLIAMS' FRIENDS...**Complaint that Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller aren't working on new plays by Chapman, News, rallied the Williams forces. Literary agent and press agent both wrote to critic telling him that their charge was writing like crazy. Chapman said that Williams, Miller, Hellman and Chase should be turning out one play per year instead of sitting on their "fat assets".

**BROKERS & CLUBS...**Theatre party clubs like "Show of the Month" and "Hit of the Month" may be finished, predicts Watt, News, if ticket brokers are able to reintroduce the buy which has been outlawed since 1939. This would enable broker to buy as many tickets as he wanted in advance, instead of receiving allotments. Variety says method would raise per ticket over 75 cents price.

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' News & Notes '  
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Little theatre seating 50 people is for rent in New York for \$100 a month...Show of the Month considering service to obtain tickets for out of town visitors and inaugurate discussion groups on the plays it selects...New Broadway musical, rumors Killgallen, Journal-American, has no second act. The director is writing one for the authors...Arena Theatre considering idea of presenting a new show each week, the final performance of which would be televised..



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' Summer Theatre Round-Up '  
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Fifth year of summer circuit traveling has been best for Rice, Post. He has seen some of the best productions, best managed playhouses, superior companies and freshest talent in all fields. His honor roll covered producers, directors, actors and playwrights in the 35 theatres he visited.

Second thoughts on summer presentations were compiled by Hawkins, WT&S. Theatre in the round must have more than novelty to last; there must be a definite reason for presenting play in arena style. The answer he feels is that new plays must be written for the new medium. While answer to mid-summer revivals of museum pieces seems to be to pump modern comment into the old script. Thus "Festival Theatre" plays remained dull while Right You Are If You Think You Are was given new life. Hawkins didn't catch many summer stock shows, but he did like Ivy Tower Playhouse at Spring Lake, NJ. Their production of Mr. Barry's Etchings was better than the Broadway version.

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' Interview Round-Up '  
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BRIAN ACWORTH...Producer of Oxford University Players, which just completed tour of United States, detailed trip to ABC Nancy Craig. Idea came from huge dramatic interest at Oxford, which has 30 dramatic groups. Players chipped in as much as they could afford, while Acworth made arrangements by mail. American college groups loaned them three cars to travel in, plus giving them room and board during trip.

ALEXANDER INCE...Producer of forthcoming Miss Mabel called on Equity to assume leadership in making plans to move legitimate theatre into the 3000 movie houses that will be closed by TV within the next five years, he told Theatre News Weekly. He also asked the political leaders of NYC to advertise the legitimate theatre throughout the country. Ince's plan would set up theatre groups in each closed movie house.

EVA GABOR...The Happy Time star enjoys her Broadway role very much she told WABD Eloise McElhone. The cast has so much fun she doesn't think they will ever get stale. In addition to getting her own TV show, she is helping her sisters retail "Creme Gabor" at 699 Madison Avenue.

JUDY HOLLIDAY...Star of Born Yesterday fame is a hero on Broadway because she conquered the rich adversary called Hollywood, points out Kilgallen, Journal-American. She did it without the conventional weapons -- the plunging neckline, the breathtaking profile, the bathing suit. All she could do was act. After many years of waiting Judy landed her original role in the movie version.

BOB O'DONNELL...Former International Chief Barker of Variety Clubs and Texas movie circuit owner hopes that the NYC chapter of Variety Clubs will soon take over the operation of Will Rogers Hospital at Saranac Lake, NY, he told WNBC Hi Jinx when they visited Dallas. He thinks large size TV is all right for sports and news events, but it will never replace the legitimate theatre.

JOSEPHINE HULL...Star of forthcoming Spewack play The Golden State favors theatre over movies she admitted to WCBS Margaret Arlen. Former gives you continuity in each part you create, while hours are much better. Movie version of "Harvey" opens in November...Sheaffer, Eagle, feels that Miss Hull was probably dreamed up on Walt Disney's drawing board, rather than born. There's an ageless pixie quality about her that he loves.

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' Chit-Chat '  
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Patrons should face members of their own party when passing those who are seated end face away from strangers, advises "Manners" column of News.

